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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S GOODWILL VISIT TO BAGUIO CITY AND LA TRINIDAD MUNICIPALITY

REF: MANILA 2448 (CLAN VIOLENCE)

11. SUMMARY. In the wake of devastating mudslides in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), the Ambassador travelled to Baguio City December 3 and 4 for a goodwill visit and to host the annual holiday reception. On December 3, the Ambassador announced USG plans to provide an additional \$10 million in food aid to the Philippines, highlighting the cooperation between USAID, the World Food Program (WFP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the relief operations in the CAR. At the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) the Ambassador met with the Superintendent, Vice Admiral Calderon, and delivered a keynote address on leadership, peace, security, and military cooperation to the cadets. In the evening the Ambassador hosted a holiday reception featuring businesspeople, university officials, PMA officers and cadets, journalists, government officials, WFP officials, Peace Corps volunteers and other guests from civil society. On December 4, the Ambassador conveyed holiday greetings over the airwaves as a guest on a live radio talk show hosted by Bombo Radyo Philippines. The Ambassador concluded her trip with a visit to disaster-affected areas in La Trinidad Municipality along with the Governor of Benguet Province. The Ambassador met with displaced residents and participated in the handover of relief goods provided with USG logistical support. END SUMMARY.

BAGUIO: PLANNED CITY IN THE MOUNTAINS

12. Located along the ridges of Cordillera Central, Baguio was designed by American urban planner and architect Daniel Burnham and marked its centennial as a chartered city this year. Baguio City continues to grow and remains an important economic and educational hub for the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). Baguio City attracts a constant flow of travelers year-round because of its temperate climate and mountain scenery and is also an industrial base with high tech American firms such as Moog Controls and Texas Instruments operating in the Baguio City Economic Zone (BCEZ). Home to the PMA and eight other major universities, Baguio City is also a driving force in higher education in the Philippines.

13. Baguio's status as a regional hub in a remote region makes it an opportune setting for the U.S. Mission to do outreach in a variety of forms. Peace Corps volunteers contribute in the areas of education, youth development and environment protection. There are American Corners in the Baguio City Public Library and St. Louis University. USAID has supported several local health and environmental initiatives. The American Citizen Services Unit of the Consular Section makes quarterly visits to Baguio City to provide services to the significant number of American Citizens residing in the city and neighboring provinces.

RELIEF OPERATIONS FOR VICTIMS OF TYPHOON PARMA ONGOING

14. La Trinidad Municipality borders Baguio City and was hit hard by Typhoon Parma in October 2009. Mudslides devastated entire settlements on the slopes of the foothills surrounding the town. The mountainous terrain poses a serious challenge to reconstruction efforts. Destroyed roads, collapsed bridges, and widespread flooding have resulted in significant logistical constraints for the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and humanitarian organizations. In recognition of the collaborative efforts by the USG and local partners, the Ambassador visited a logistics center established through a grant from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). The center is jointly operated by the World Food Program (WFP), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the National Disaster Coordinating Council. The WFP received \$1 million from OFDA to provide logistics support in the distribution of relief goods and much needed supplies to populations affected by Tropical Storm Ketsana and Typhoon Parma. This has enabled the GRP and humanitarian agencies to provide assistance to more than 2 million people. The center is stocked with relief goods donated by the GRP, foreign governments, international organizations, local foundations, the private sector and individuals. The tour ended with an announcement by the Ambassador of \$10 million in additional food aid as part of the USG assistance to disaster-affected communities in the Philippines.

15. Little Kibungan, a vegetable farming community, was hit by a landslide that killed 77 people (74 residents and 3 rescue workers) on October 8, 2009. The landslide destroyed a large area of cultivable land and buried much of the community under five to six meters of mud. The Ambassador viewed the devastation resulting from the landslide, met with displaced survivors, and participated in the handover of relief goods provided with USG-funded transportation and logistics. She was joined by Benguet Governor Nestor Fongwan, who gave a detailed account of the calamity, described the widespread

damage throughout the province, and predicted that recovery efforts will take some time, as many remote communities in mountainous areas have been cut off. The Ambassador spoke with the press, offering

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her condolences to the families who lost loved ones and words of support for those displaced and now homeless. The visit concluded with a stop at Strawberry Farm to visit displaced persons living in a tent city evacuation center. The Ambassador greeted survivors and representatives from WFP and DSWD who carried out relief operations. At the invitation of Mayor Artemio Galwan of La Trinidad, the Ambassador participated in a handover of rice and other foodstuffs provided with USG logistical support.

PMA CADETS PREPARE FOR SERVICE

16. The PMA is the top training academy for future officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The coed institution's curriculum is patterned after West Point's and offers specialized training to all three branches of the AFP. The Ambassador met with the Superintendent, Vice Admiral Leonardo C. Calderon Jr., who condemned the recent massacre in Maguindanao (reftel) in the strongest terms. Discussing the upcoming 2010 Presidential elections, Calderon stated that it was imperative for the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to function in a safe and transparent environment and the military establishment should remain neutral. He highlighted PMA's efforts to encourage the cadets to exercise their own right to vote. Calderon added that applications for PMA were up this year and was optimistic that his recruitment strategy would continue to ensure a diverse cadet corps.

17. After her meeting with the Superintendent, the Ambassador addressed over 1,000 cadets. The Ambassador discussed the USG focus on the "3-Ds" -- development, diplomacy and defense. She highlighted President Obama's speech to the cadets of West Point on December 1 and underscored the USG commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan. The Ambassador spoke about the importance of partnership with government, international organizations and civil society to foster peace and development in Afghanistan. The Ambassador reiterated that the U.S. did not want bases in the Philippines and described the benefits of ongoing military cooperation. She noted the contributions of the Republic of the Philippines to UN peacekeeping operations in conflict zones, praised the cadets as future leaders of the Philippines, and challenged them to contribute for the good of society.

OUTREACH AT HOLIDAY RECEPTION AND MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

18. The Ambassador addressed both national and local media during her stay in Baguio. In a taped local television interview and nationally broadcast live radio interview, the Ambassador emphasized the close historical relationship between the United States and Baguio City. She highlighted the USG commitment of \$10 million in food aid, condemned the Maguindano massacre, and called for a thorough and transparent investigation. On the upcoming 2010 presidential elections, the Ambassador stated that journalists had an important role to play in disseminating information and facilitating communication in the public sphere.

19. The holiday reception brought together businesspeople, university officials, PMA officers and cadets, journalists, government officials, WFP officials, Peace Corps volunteers, local American citizens, and other guests from civil society. The event provided an opportunity for Embassy officers to build or further develop ties with a broad range of contacts from the area. The Consul General, Economic Counselor, JUSMAG representatives, and others from the Embassy also were in attendance.

KENNEY